

Northern California News & Events

Japanese-American WWII Veterans Receive Congressional Gold Medal



Recently, I had the honor of presenting the Congressional Gold Medal to nineteen heroes who served in the Japanese-American Military Intelligence Service, the 442nd Regimental Combat Team, and the 100th Infantry Battalion during World War II. This medal, the highest civilian award presented by Congress, is awarded for an “outstanding deed or act of service to the United States.” Four veterans attended the ceremony to receive their Congressional Gold Medal, and fifteen veterans were awarded it posthumously.



Ongoing Concerns for the North State Agricultural Community

I recently visited with board members from the Yolo County Farm Bureau. I was pleased to discuss how the recently enacted trade agreements with South Korea, Panama and Colombia will benefit local growers. In addition, we discussed major issues that impact our agricultural community, including the Farm Bill and the looming death tax that is scheduled to return on January 1, 2013. Other critical issues for agri-business and farmers include state and federal pest control regulations, federal energy policy, and the need for immigration reform. Congress must work to resolve these issues to bring certainty to North State farmers and ranchers.

Right Now

America Needs More Than a Part-Time Recovery

While any new job is good news for the American who finds it, the unemployment report released this week by the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows unacceptably weak job creation in September. The grim reality is that although the unemployment rate has dipped, the slight decline occurred mostly because the number of people with part-time jobs who wanted full-time work rose substantially. Furthermore, the unemployment figure does not count those who are so discouraged that they have given up looking for work. So the “real” unemployment rate is higher than 10% nationwide, and considerably higher here in Northern California.

I believe we need to implement new policies that emphasize job creation and economic growth. House Republicans have passed a [Plan for America's Job Creators](#) to get businesses hiring again so that all Americans who want a full-time job can have a full-time job. We can do better. We must.

Federal Debt Surpasses \$16 Trillion

The Treasury Department recently announced that our national debt has passed \$16 trillion for the first time in American history. That amounts to more than \$50,000 for every man, woman, and child in the United States. In fact, each American's share of the national debt has increased by about \$16,500 since President Obama took office in January 2009. Yet all of this spending and debt has not brought about sustained economic growth. Instead, the American people continue to face high unemployment and stagnant incomes while we wait for the bill to come due. We cannot continue down this course. House Republicans have passed legislation to cut federal spending and get back on the path to a balanced budget. We must act now for the sake of our economic future.

Inspector General's Report Highlights Administration Failures During Operation Fast and Furious

On September 19, the Department of Justice (DOJ) Inspector General (IG) Michael Horowitz released a 471-page report on Operation Fast and Furious. According to this report, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) did not consider public safety and the DOJ showed a severe lack of oversight. Fourteen officials were faulted by the report; after its release, Deputy Assistant Attorney General Jason Weinstein resigned and ATF chief Kenneth Melson retired. The IG report has listed several recommendations to help the DOJ to strengthen the performance of ATF and the supervision and leadership of its officials.

It is clear that the DOJ has [violated the trust](#) of the American people. Initially, the Department [allowed an initiative](#) that led to the death of U.S. Border Patrol Agent Brian Terry and permitted the distribution of 1,500 weapons to members of drug trafficking organizations. Then, the DOJ consistently failed to cooperate with an investigation by the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, leading the House of Representatives to vote to hold Attorney General Holder in [contempt of Congress](#). Please know that I will continue to support efforts to hold the DOJ accountable and to ensure that a similar operation never occurs again.

Recent Past

House Denounces Effort to Waive Welfare Work Requirements

Recently, the House of Representatives passed a [resolution](#) to express disapproval of the Obama Administration's plan to waive welfare work requirements. As I

[discussed previously](#)

, I believe this waiver will undermine a critical component of the successful welfare reform law that has moved millions of Americans out of poverty. I joined

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other House members in a bipartisan effort to reject the Administration's misguided plan. You can read the remarks I submitted during the debate on the legislation

[here](#)

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Holding Obama Administration Accountable on Medicare Bonus Program

On September 21, I chaired a hearing in the House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Health to further examine the [concerns I raised](#) in my July letter to Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Kathleen Sebelius regarding a "quality bonus" program for Medicare Advantage plans. Despite serious concerns, Secretary Sebelius has resisted GAO's recommendation to cancel the program. The reason for her refusal may well lie in an effort to postpone the impact of the health law's Medicare cuts until after the presidential election. When the cuts do fully take effect, many Medicare Advantage plans will disappear from the market, forcing seniors enrolled in those plans to either lose benefits or pay more for comparable coverage.

The hearing also featured a discussion of "Special Needs Plans" (SNPs), private Medicare plans that are specifically tailored toward those who are also eligible for Medicaid, those with chronic medical conditions, and those who live in long-term care settings. While more study is needed, there is growing evidence that SNPs can provide better care coordination than the standard Medicare program, leading to improved health outcomes.